

Anne Murray: *"My brother did not hang himself. He was a happy go lucky, typical brother, who loved his family dearly. ...It is not true, he was*

murdered, and everyone in Wee Waa knows it, we know it, the police who killed him know it and it is time Australia should know it."

Arthur Murray collapsed upon hearing the news his son was dead. The ambulance that had just delivered Eddie's body to the morgue returned to take Arthur to hospital.

None of the Murray family believed Eddie would have harmed himself. There had been nothing to indicate Eddie was unhappy let alone suicidal. He had booked his train ticket back to Sydney and was excited about the prospect of touring with the Redfern *All Blacks* to New Zealand.

There was an immediate and spontaneous reaction to the devastating news as it swept around the small town. Three shop windows were broken as a protest against Eddie's death. Lyall Combo, one of Eddie's drinking companions that day, was arrested for the incident.

Years later, a Royal Commission into his death concluded: *"There is no evidence to suggest that Eddie was suicidal, i.e., likely to deliberately kill himself. His father, Arthur Murray, and friend, Lyall Combo, knew of no reason why he would kill himself. Eddie's uncle, Allan Murray, thought he was incapable of suicide. Dr. Mulvey from his treatment of Eddie knew of no reason why Eddie would want to take his own life. There is no evidence of anything in Eddie's background that would suggest he wanted to kill himself. In fact, at the time of his death, to most people, he seemed happy."*

Arthur Murray: *"He was supposed to be a first-grade footballer. He was offered that in a way when he played for the All Blacks at Red Field. He was achieved a chance to go over to NZ with the Aboriginal All Blacks. But his death denied him of that."*

Anne remembered: *"When I saw him outside the Imperial Hotel he was wearing creamy pants, his red and white shirt with the writing across it, Walgett Leagues. When I next saw my brother, he was at the Coroner's. He was not wearing his clothes. He was bare from the waist up and I could see marks around his neck and bruises on his chest. The pants the coppers dressed him in were too big and too long, hanging over his feet, he had no shoes or socks. I asked for his clothes, where are his clothes? They would not respond. What happened to his clothes? What happened to his personal effects? His wallet has never been returned to us. Why?"*

Anne Murray: *"Before a police photographer arrived to take pictures of Eddie, his body had been removed from the cell in which he died. The next day his clothes were missing. When the Coroner looked into the matter, he found instances of unreliability in the evidence offered by police to the Court."*

"The clothes were the most vital forensic evidence, they could have determined what happened, they would have been covered in blood – proof that he did not suicide. Eddie would never take his life, that's a dirty lie by them. He was liked and loved, a champion rugby league player. Obviously the clothes were hidden and then destroyed. We want to know by whom, it's not hard as there weren't many officers on duty. We get this investigated and we have the murderers."

John Pilger: *"The enemies Arthur and his comrades made were the Australian equivalent of those standing in the way of Martin Luther King's civil rights campaigners in the United States. They were the police, local politicians, the media. "Who in the town was with you?" I asked Arthur. He thought for a while. "There was a chemist," he said. "who was kind to Aboriginal people. Mostly we were on our own."*

One night, the police rolled up at the Murray house and told Arthur to go and get his daughter out of the police van. Arthur went out to find his daughter, Anne, covered in blood.

The family was regularly harassed or threatened by the local police. Two weeks before Eddie's death they told Arthur that were going to "get" either him or his son. A threat that proved profoundly prophetic.

When police picked him up, witnesses say that they chanted repeatedly, *"Come on Eddie Murray, we want you, Come on Eddie Murray, we want you"*, as they were singling out their target. Eddie's cousin, Don Murray, was drinking with him at the time. Donnie said to police: *"Take me also I'm more drunk than him"*, to which the police replied *"No we only want the one."*

Eddie Murray was not arrested but detained under the NSW Intoxicated Persons Act and placed in "preventive detention" rather than simply taken home. Arthur Murray: *"They could have brought him home. We only live just up the road. There was no need whatsoever to detain him and lock him in the cell."*

At the time, according to the 1981-82 Bureau of Crime Statistics report, the rate of detention of Aboriginal people in north-western NSW under the Intoxicated Persons Act was 93 times the overall State rate – they were being consistently locked up around the clock.

Anne Murray: *"(The police) detained him for being drunk and disorderly. The police could have taken him home but instead kept him in custody. He was heard to cry out from his cell, 'Why do you always pick on me? Why don't you pick on the white people?' Less than one hour later, he was dead."*

Arthur Murray and other members of the family, *"...recalled conversations with Eddie in which he stated that he had been pressured and threatened by Constable Rodney Fitzgerald."* Several witnesses testified that Wee Waa Constable Rodney Fitzgerald was one of the officers who detained Eddie, but Fitzgerald denied this saying he did not arrive at work until afterwards. After weighing up all the evidence as to his whereabouts, Justice Muirhead accepted Fitzgerald's account.

Witnesses accused of false evidence

By TONY HEWETT

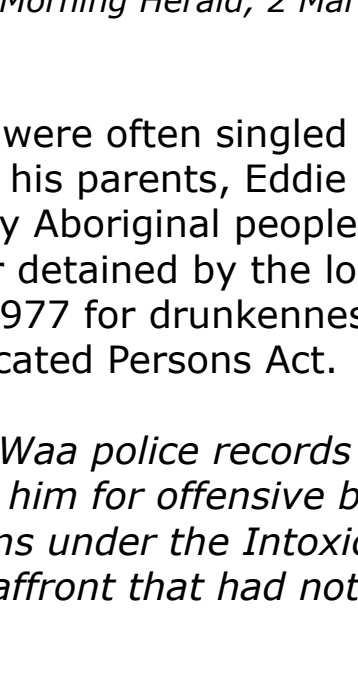
Black witnesses, including the father of a 21-year-old Aboriginal who was found hanged in the Wee Waa police cells in 1981, were accused yesterday of lying to the Muirhead Royal Commission.

It was also suggested that they had fabricated evidence.

Evidence given by one Aboriginal, Mr Lyall Combo, was challenged by counsel for the NSW Police, Mr Michael Williams, who suggested that his memory was deficient because he had consumed too much alcohol since Mr Eddie Murray was found hanged on June 12, 1981.

Arthur Murray, Mr Murray's father, constantly had to raise his voice to protest at suggestions put to him by Mr Williams, who cross-examined him on whether his son had been harassed by a Wee Waa police constable, Rodney Fitzgerald.

Mr Murray told the commission that Constable Fitzgerald, who is said to have threatened Eddie Murray on three separate occasions, had visited his Wee Waa home on March 24, 1981



THE MUIRHEAD INQUIRY

because of noise complaints from neighbours.

Mr Williams was rebuked after he suggested that Mr Murray and his son abused the officer.

Constable Fitzgerald arrived at the home as Mr Murray and his son were drinking on the front lawn. The officer offered them a cigarette and beckoned them over. He then tried to arrest them, according to Mr Murray who told Mr Williams to listen to "his version" of the incident.

The two Aborigines were chased to their front door by Constable Fitzgerald and Mr Murray slipped and injured his leg, he told the commission. There were no arrests.

"I put it to you that it did not happen," said Mr Williams.

"It did," shouted Mr Murray.

Later, Mr Williams said: "I want to put it to you quite clearly that no threat was made to Eddie by Constable Fitzgerald."

Mr Murray replied: "That might be your recollection."

On June 12, Mr Eddie Murray was arrested and detained for drunkenness.

Mr Murray was found hanging in a police cell about 3 pm that day.

Mr Combo said that as he stood outside Wee Waa's post office, he had seen Constable Fitzgerald, driving a police van, arrive at the Imperial Hotel, where Mr Murray was arguing with a barmaid, about 1.30 pm.

At the 1982 coroner's inquest, Mr Fitzgerald denied that he had taken part in Mr Murray's arrest.

Another witnesses, Mr Christopher Winters, also told the commission yesterday that he had seen Constable Fitzgerald arrive in a police van and help arrest Mr Murray.

A third witness, Ms Cheryl Gordon, said she saw an officer whom she thought was Constable Fitzgerald.

Sydney Morning Herald, 2 March 1988

The Murray family members were often singled out for racist harassment, especially by the police. Like his parents, Eddie also talked openly about the discrimination experienced by Aboriginal people in Wee Waa. Eddie was no stranger to being arrested or detained by the local police. Eddie had been arrested seven times since 1977 for drunkenness and had been detained three times under the Intoxicated Persons Act.

Justice Muirhead: *"The Wee Waa police records show that Eddie had two convictions recorded against him for offensive behaviour, seven for drunkenness, three detentions under the Intoxicated Persons Act, and a charge of serious harm and affront that had not been finalised at the time of his death."*

This was in stark contrast to his life in Sydney where he never had any trouble with the police although these bouts of binge drinking was more of a phenomenon of his life in Wee Waa.

Clearly, there was a lot of anger and resentment towards the Murray family for doing nothing more than simply looking after their own interests. There can be little doubt that there was resentment by some locals who wanted to dissuade Arthur from being an effective campaigner and successful organiser on behalf of his People.

The next day the family, in the company of Lyall Munro Snr., viewed the body. Later they went to the police station. The police showed them the blanket they claimed Eddie had torn strips from to hang himself.

Anne Murray recalled: *"The cop pulled out the grey blanket he claimed Eddie hung himself with. I tried to tear at it, and I turned around to the cop and said how did Eddie tear this when I can't tear it, it needs scissors to cut through it. And I said to him that we can see by the nature of the broken threads that it has been cut by scissors."*

Apart from the claims made by the police themselves, no other person was witness to the alleged hanging; including a doctor who pronounced him dead at the scene and an ambulance officer who was called to remove the body. After reading the numerous accounts about Eddie's death, we are left with a graphic image of Eddie with his head in a noose hanging from the ventilation grill above his cell door with his feet touching the ground. If the cause of death was something other than a suicidal hanging, there would be little reason to go to the trouble of actually staging a fake hanging since nobody saw it or any photographs taken.

Anne Murray: *"Every time I talk about things it makes me cry, but it needs to be told. Tell you the truth, I think about it every day. At night I see him laying in the morgue. I can see his face, see it clearly."*

At the 1981 Coronial Inquest, the verdict was inconclusive. It found that Eddie *"died at his own hand or the hand of person or persons unknown."* The counsel for the Murray family, Kevin Coorey said it better when he submitted to the Royal Commission in Aboriginal Deaths in Custody that Eddie *"died at the hand of a police officer or police officers unknown."*

At the original inquest, the coroner strongly criticised the police. He described the police evidence as "highly suspicious" and their records were found to have been falsified. The coroner concluded there was no evidence that Eddie Murray took his own life. Medical experts agreed that it was improbable that someone with a blood alcohol level of 0.3 could decide to hang himself and actually carry out that intention.

Anne Murray: *"I want the police to be charged, they gotta be charged. I want people to bring back the things that they stole from our family."*

Arthur Murray: *"When the inquest was held in Narrabri and Sydney, the coroner found that Eddie had died by the hand of some person or persons unknown. So the coroner's finding was an open verdict. I was never satisfied with the way the investigation went on by the police."*

Arthur Murray: *"They (police) didn't worry. They didn't think that we would pursue it further, which they did."*

Leila Murray: *"I think the police got a shock when we wanted an investigation into our son's death, because we knew that our son wouldn't take his own life."*


Arthur Murray: *"Eddie's death made me so much more determined to fight back more strongly. We wanted to find out the truth of how Eddie's life was taken. We believed Eddie was killed in custody, and that is a belief we still have."*

Leila Murray: *"They're killing Aboriginal people, just killing us."*



Grave site, Wee Waa cemetery.

Four days before Eddie died in police custody, Keith Morris was awarded the Medal of the Order of Australia (OAM) on the Queen's Birthday on 8th June 1981. The governor of N.S.W. presented the OAM medal to him. Morris was the very first resident of the Wee Waa district to receive a Queen's honours award. The citation stated: *"For services in the field of Aboriginal welfare."*



AM TO WEE WAA MAN

Mr. Keith Raymond Morris of Delta Pine Place, Wee Waa has been awarded the Medal of the Order of Australia in the Queen's Birthday Honours.

Mr. Morris was recognised for his work for aboriginal welfare in Australia.

He has been President of Pinbucca Aboriginal Co-operative (formerly Wee Waa Aboriginal Advancement Association) since 1976 and has taken an active interest in the welfare of itinerant and residing aboriginal families in the Wee Waa.

He works closely with government departments and community welfare groups in the interests of aboriginal advancement in the North West.

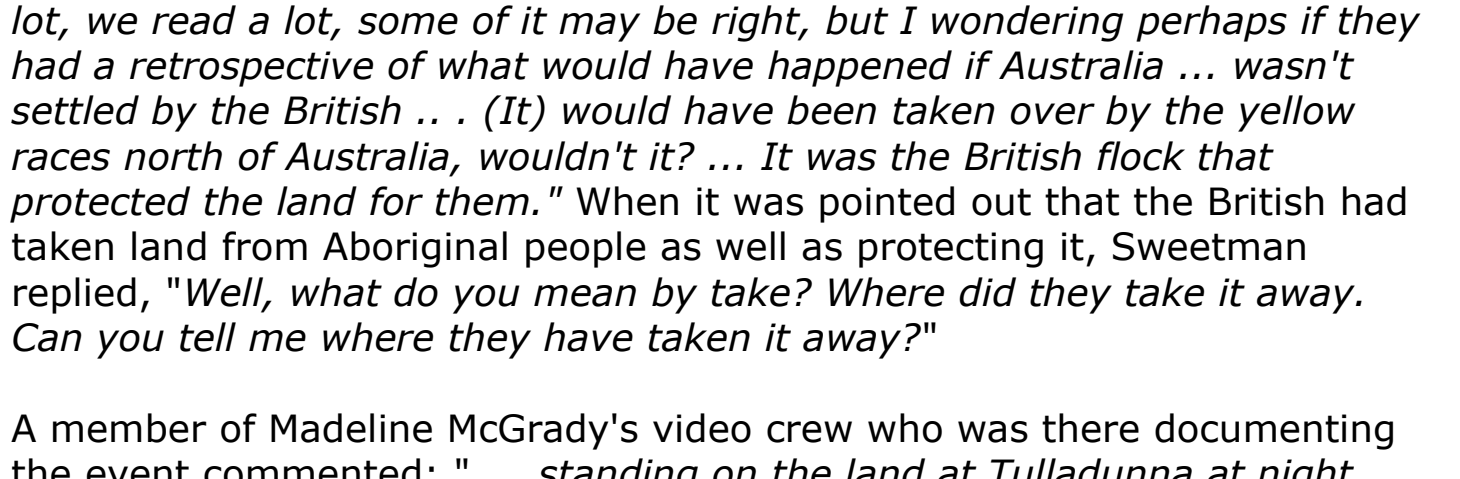
Mr. Morris said on Saturday that he had mixed emotions about receiving the medal but was surprised and pleased to be nominated for the honour.

North Western Courier (front page) 16 June 1981

Keith Morris and Arthur Murray were old friends who enjoyed an 'easy familiarity'. Keith Morris had married Jean Sands who had grown up with Arthur Murray on Angedool Reserve near Lightning Ridge. As part of the team with Arthur and others, Keith Morris played a significant role in helping the Indigenous cotton chippers to improve their lot in life. This of course led to the same sort of racist backlash that all Indigenous progressives faced in Wee Waa.



The publican from the Royal Hotel made a cardboard crown to mock Morris's well-deserved OAM award. Keith Morris was dubbed "King Koon". This disrespectful slap in the face was on public display sitting on a shelf nestled among the bottles of liquor behind the bar. Should anyone call this a racist slur, the publican had an easy way out by claiming it was just a joke and he was simply pulling Morris's leg in the spirit of good fun. Of course, this excuse sounded pretty hollow to many people, even in racist Wee Waa.



The label reads 'OAM' 'KING KOON'. Photo: © Peter Gray 1982

Just prior to the tragic events in the Wee Waa jail, the Namoi Shire Council had closed the Tulladunna camp. The council argued it was "unsightly" and wanted the workers to be moved to a newly created Aboriginal Reserve much further out of town. Aboriginal protesters hoped to counter this closure by conducting a sit-in at Tulladunna that would bring publicity to the issue and hopefully prompt the council to reconsider their decision before the beginning of the next summer-chipping season.

Karen Flick was among the protesters. She argued that the sit-in was about land rights and self-determination, adding that Aboriginal people deserved greater recognition for their contribution to the cotton industry.



The protest camp at Tulladunna. Photo: © Stephen Robinson 1981

Karen recalled: *"We had been talking about land matters I guess around Wee Waa for a long time, and then the council started to close down some of the camping areas saying it was unhealthy or something like that, it was not fit for people and the water was bugged up. But they had bugged the water up themselves, through the run off of the chemicals they used on the cotton! So we campaigned around the land issue – it was about challenging the local council that Tulladunna had to be left open because for people who come there and work, seasonally on the cotton chipping, that was the place that they would stay. So, we had a responsibility to keep Tulladunna open."*

"Then Eddie Murray was killed in June and that involved our family and the Murray family big time obviously. I remember the day that Helen Murray, his sister, came around and said to Mum and Auntie Iz, 'You got to come! You got to come! Eddie's dead', so they just jumped in the car and went up there. And then all the other things that happened after that, it was very intense, it was very difficult to go through that."

"It was all that small town stuff, you know, that was really raw and red for me. Because all we were doing was sitting on our country, standing up for our rights and challenging the authorities about the death and what had happened."

Left to Right: Joe Flick, Arthur Murray (partly obscured), Isabel Flick, Barbara Flick and Karen Flick. Jenny Brockie is sitting with her back to camera reporting for ABC news. Photo: © Joanna Kelly 1981.

The metal spike-array sitting in front of Karen Flick is a weapon designed to puncture car tires. This tire shredder was found nearby concealed as a booby trap on the road as you approach the camp.

Namoi Shire President, Norman Sweetman, appeared to have little understanding of what was happening around him. He commented: *"I'm not that conversant with ... Aboriginal land rights ..."* he said. *"... we hear a lot, we read a lot, some of it may be right, but I wondering perhaps if they had a retrospective of what would have happened if Australia ... wasn't settled by the British ... (It) would have been taken over by the yellow races north of Australia, wouldn't it? ... It was the British flock that protected the land for them."* When it was pointed out that the British had taken land from Aboriginal people as well as protecting it, Sweetman replied, *"Well, what do you mean by take? Where did they take it away. Can you tell me where they have taken it away?"*

A member of Madeline McGrady's video crew who was there documenting the event commented: *".....standing on the land at Tulladunna at night, everybody around me, men, women, children scared and worried that the headlights coming down a lonely dark road belonged to whoever it was that had the shotgun, returning."*

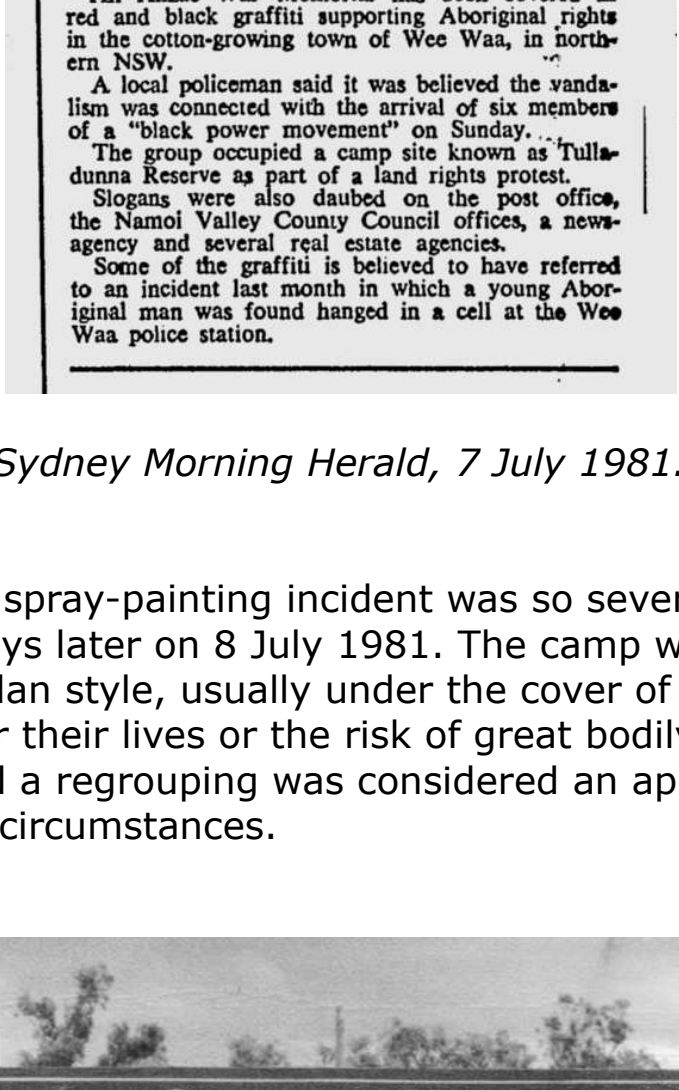
Kevin Cook: *"That car came that night. Tried to run over the tents. One of the Koorie lads from Tranby was sleeping in it. He jumped up and chased the car, banged on it with his fists on the windows... I thought he'd be knocked ass over head, jeez he was close to getting knocked over."*

During the second week of the sit-in at Tulladunna, many shops in Wee Waa, along with the town's war memorial, were graffitied during the night. They were spray painted with red, black and yellow paint on Saturday night 4th July 1981. Residents awoke to find a range of slogans which included: *"What Kills Black Babies: Napalm in Vietnam, Cotton, Chemicals in Wee Waa"; "Cops are Murderers"; "Pay The Rent You Are On Black's Land"; "Racism Kills"; and "Land Right Now!"*

Photo: © Stephen Robinson 1981

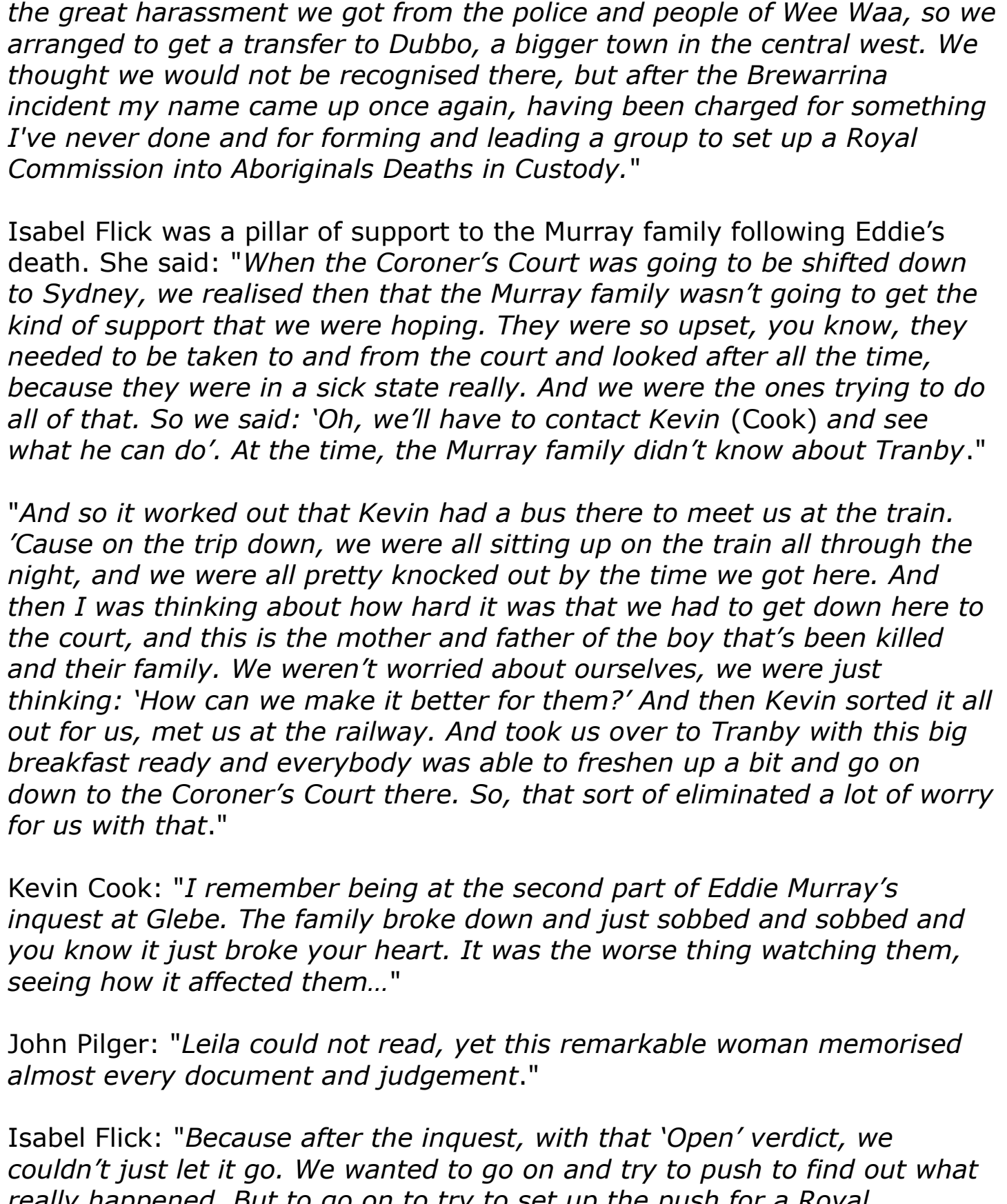
Namoi Shire Council offered a \$2000 reward for the arrest of the

perpetrators but they were never identified or apprehended.



Sydney Morning Herald, 7 July 1981.

The backlash to the spray-painting incident was so severe, the sit-in was abandoned a few days later on 8 July 1981. The camp was relentlessly attacked Klu-Klux-Klan style, usually under the cover of darkness. The protesters feared for their lives or the risk of great bodily harm, so a strategic retreat and a regrouping was considered an appropriate tactical response under the circumstances.



The council sign was spray painted with two Aboriginal flags and the word "Aboriginaland" underneath. Photo: © Peter Gray 1982

Arthur Murray: "After Eddie's death we couldn't live in Wee Waa because of the great harassment we got from the police and people of Wee Waa, so we arranged to get a transfer to Dubbo, a bigger town in the central west. We thought we would not be recognised there, but after the Brewarrina incident my name came up once again, having been charged for something I've never done and for forming and leading a group to set up a Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody."

Isabel Flick was a pillar of support to the Murray family following Eddie's death. She said: "When the Coroner's Court was going to be shifted down to Sydney, we realised then that the Murray family wasn't going to get the kind of support that we were hoping. They were so upset, you know, they needed to be taken to and from the court and looked after all the time, because they were in a sick state really. And we were the ones trying to do all of that. So we said: 'Oh, we'll have to contact Kevin (Cook) and see what he can do'. At the time, the Murray family didn't know about Tranby."

"And so it worked out that Kevin had a bus there to meet us at the train. 'Cause on the trip down, we were all sitting up on the train all through the night, and we were all pretty knocked out by the time we got here. And then I was thinking about how hard it was that we had to get down here to the court, and this is the mother and father of the boy that's been killed and their family. We weren't worried about ourselves, we were just thinking: 'How can we make it better for them?' And then Kevin sorted it all out for us, met us at the railway. And took us over to Tranby with this big breakfast ready and everybody was able to freshen up a bit and go on down to the Coroner's Court there. So, that sort of eliminated a lot of worry for us with that."

Kevin Cook: "I remember being at the second part of Eddie Murray's inquest at Glebe. The family broke down and just sobbed and sobbed and you know it just broke your heart. It was the worse thing watching them, seeing how it affected them..."

John Pilger: "Leila could not read, yet this remarkable woman memorised almost every document and judgement."

Isabel Flick: "Because after the inquest, with that 'Open' verdict, we couldn't just let it go. We wanted to go on and try to push to find out what really happened. But to go on to try to set up the push for a Royal Commission into the Deaths in Custody was a pretty full-on sort of decision for us."

Karen Flick: "And it was important for us, for me anyway, to make sure politicians heard Black voices, cause they can easily be dismissive you know..."

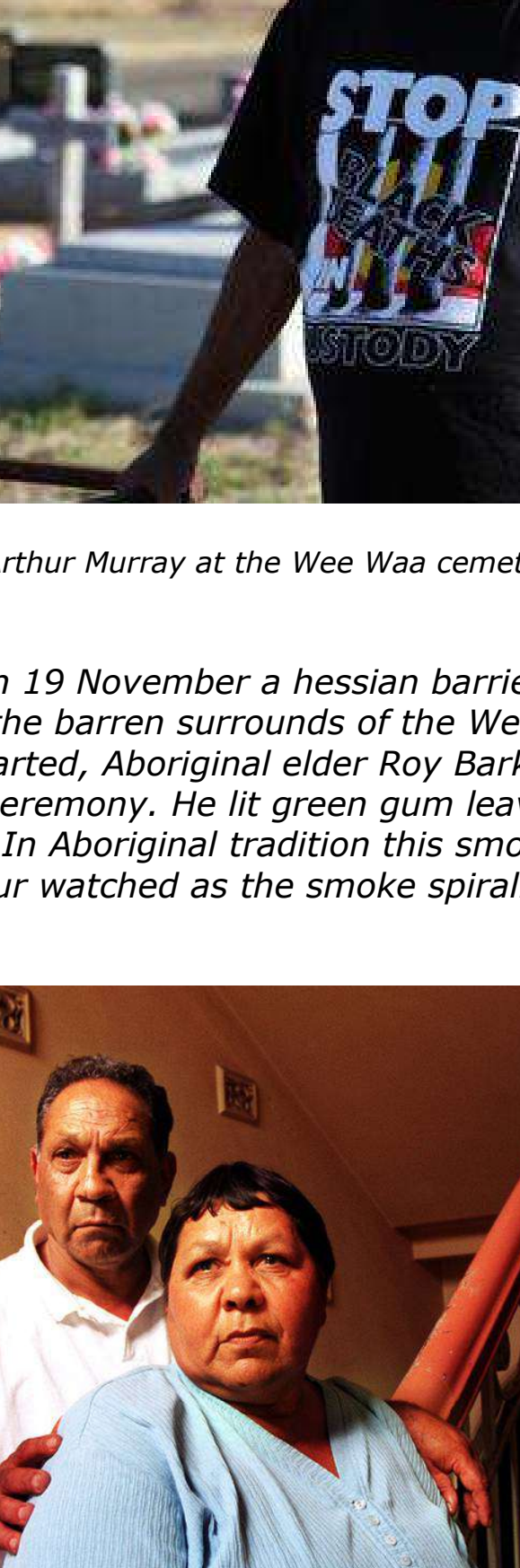
Karen Flick: "I remember talking to Gerry Hand, Clyde Holding, two of the federal ministers we went through during that period. They were fairly dismissive until we began to show there was not just one case – and we were building on it all the time, showing them – 'Here's another case, and here's another one'. ... So that built the case, at the Royal Commission."

In Western Australia, for example, where Aborigines comprise 2.7 per cent of the population, they accounted for more than one-third of the prison population in 1986.

On 10 August 1987, Prime Minister Bob Hawke announced the formation of a Royal Commission to investigate the causes of deaths of Aboriginals while in custody. The inquiry was a response to a public outcry over an alarming number of deaths in custody, often under suspicious circumstances.

Justice Muirhead was chosen to head the Royal Commission because he had a reputation in Aboriginal affairs. Hearings began in 1988. The commission initially set out to examine 44 specific cases but that grew to ninety-nine cases, 32 in Western Australia, 27 in Queensland, 21 in South Australia and the Northern Territory and 19 across NSW, Victoria and Tasmania. The cases spanned a 10-year period between 1 January 1980 and 31 May 1989, and included the death of Eddie Murray in 1981 at the Wee Waa police station.

John Pilger: "Arthur and Leila set out on an extraordinary journey for justice for their son and their people. They endured the ignorance and indifference of white society and its multi-layered political and judicial bureaucracies. They won a royal commission, only to see the royal commissioner, a judge, suddenly appointed to a top government administrative job in the critical final stages of the hearing."



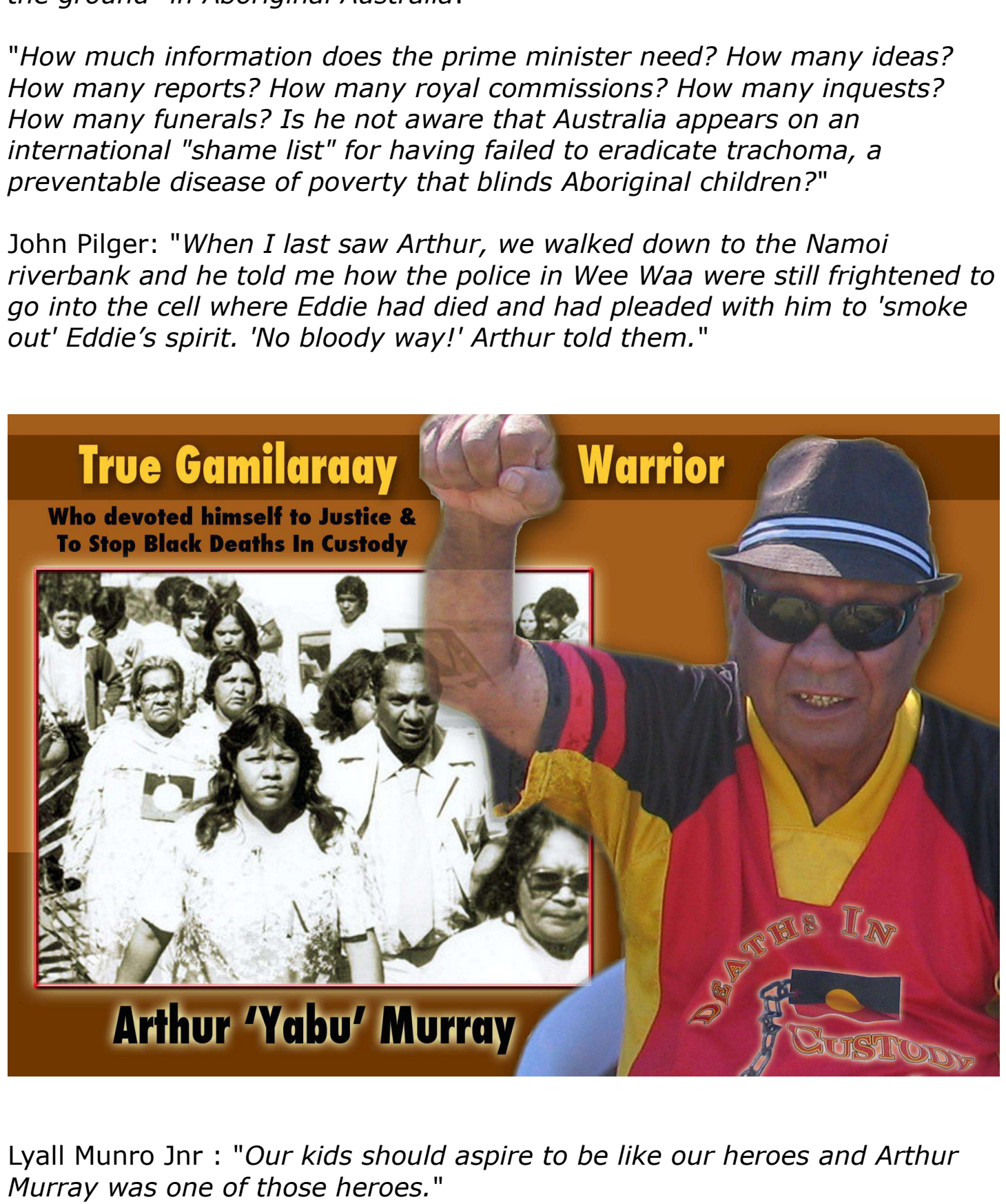
Sydney Morning Herald, 28 January 1988

The final report of the Commission released on 15 April 1991 was 5 volumes in length. The Commission concluded that the 99 deaths investigated were not due to police violence: "... the immediate causes of the deaths do not include foul play, in the sense of unlawful, deliberate killing of Aboriginal prisoners by police and prison officers. More than one-third of the deaths (37) were from disease; 30 were self-inflicted injuries; 23 were caused by other forms of external trauma, especially head injuries; and 9 were immediately associated with dangerous alcohol and other drug use. Indeed, heavy alcohol use was involved in some way in deaths in each of these categories. The chapter concludes that glaring deficiencies existed in the standard of care afforded to many of the deceased."

Leila Murray: "Ever since that time we have had trouble in our family with police harassment. Our other son, Rodney, was bashed by police in 1988, both his kidneys were damaged for life." This happened while the Royal Commission was in progress.

In the end, the commission cost about \$40 million, with another \$400 million spent on trying to implement its 339 recommendations. Those recommendations are still valid today, but very few have been implemented effectively. Every year, Aboriginal people continue to die in custody.

Arthur Murray said that the Royal Commission: "In my son's case it was just like having Eddie dug up and buried over and over again. In terms of justice, well the experience I got out of it was really nothing. The amount of money that they spent on the Royal Commission was I believe just a waste of money."



Sydney Morning Herald, 11 May 1988

In his interim report in December 1988, Muirhead wrote: "I am confident a significant number of deaths have their roots not only in health issues, but in the very despair of individuals, in frustration, in anger, in legal practices and procedures in which many Aborigines have no confidence."

The original post-mortem examination by Dr. Eric Mulvey had mysteriously disappeared and was never presented to the Muirhead inquiry. A former NSW Health Department pathologist said as lifting the Royal Commission that Dr. Mulvey's post-mortem report was "meagre, incompetent and inadequate." The Coroner's report failed to evaluate obvious bruises and marks on parts of Eddie's body other than his neck.

In 1988, Arthur Murray said: "Despite one year into the Royal Commission and evidence building up as to an unnatural hand by police officers in the death of his son, that no police officer had been pulled up on charges."

It was a commonly held belief that the Royal Commission could be an instrument in effecting change for the better. But no police were charge with any crime that most other citizens on the same body of evidence would have been convicted.

Arthur Murray: "They did nothing. Of the 99 cases that were heard before the royal commission, a lot should still be investigated because no police and no prison officers have been charged with any offences."

Leila Murray added: "They criticised the police and done nothing about it."

Arthur Murray summed it up by saying: "Where's the justice in this country?"

Aboriginal deaths in custody have risen by 150% since the Royal Commission was completed in 1991, although less were in police custody and more in prisons.

In 1997, the NSW Coroner gave approval for Eddie's remains to be exhumed under the supervision of the NSW Institute of Forensic Medicine, a painful and traumatic experience for the family.

Arthur Murray at the Wee Waa cemetery.

Simon Luckhurst: "On 19 November a hessian barrier was erected around Eddie's grave site in the barren surrounds of the Wee Waa cemetery. Before the digging started, Aboriginal elder Roy Barker performed an additional cleansing ceremony. He lit green gum leaves so that thick smoke climbed into the sky. In Aboriginal tradition this smoke takes with it sins and ghosts, and Arthur watched as the smoke spiraled above him."

Robert Cavanagh, Barrister: "Eddie Murray had a fractured sternum and that was not identified at the time of either the inquest or the royal commission. How that injury occurred is very important to know. It's most likely caused by a blow."

Dr John Dufflow, NSW Institute of Forensic Medicine: "The most likely cause of the fracture of the sternum is one or more blows to the chest some time prior to death."

Professor Nikolai Bogduk, Professor of Anatomy and Musculoskeletal Medicine: "An individual with a fractured sternum would have their chest pain strongly aggravated by movements such as lifting the arms above the head to hold or pull objects. What we take for granted when reaching up, in terms of being able to balance the upper limb as we reach up or out, would be impaired."

Barrister Robert Cavanagh, who was acting for the Murray family, said that had this injury been identified, more investigation and the calling of further witnesses would have occurred.

On January 20, 1998, the then state coroner, Derrick Hand, stated that he was "satisfied there is no new evidence or facts making it necessary or desirable in the interests of justice to hold a fresh inquest".

His successor reasserted this position. The new state coroner, John Abernethy, was also not prepared to re-open the case saying the excavator used to exhume Eddie's body in the Wee Waa cemetery in 1997 could have crushed his chest. He closed the case. This is a somewhat ridiculous assertion since this could be reliably established if the investigation was allowed to proceed. His speculation could have been put to the test.

Twice now, the courts have returned an inconclusive verdict for lack of clear evidence. The fundamental questions of how, when, where and why Eddie Murray died in police custody have not yet been answered. Any conclusions arrived at up to this point in time are now subject to serious doubt, especially the notion that Eddie died by hanging and also that he caused his own death.

The coroner's inconclusive findings at the inquest on 18 December 1981 still remains the official account of the manner and circumstances of Eddie Murray's death.

In August 2000, the NSW Minister for Police, Paul Whelan, referred the case to the NSW Police Integrity Commission but they 'declined the case'.

John Pilger: "Arthur is still fighting for justice. He's in his sixties. He's a respected elder, a hero. A few months ago, the police in Narrabri offered Arthur a lift home and instead took him for a violent ride in their bullwagon. He ended up in hospital, bruised and battered. That is how Australian heroes are treated. In the same week the police did this — as they do to black Australians, almost every day — Kevin Rudd said that his government, and I quote, "doesn't have a clear idea of what's happening on the ground" in Aboriginal Australia."

"How much information does the prime minister need? How many ideas? How many reports? How many royal commissions? How many inquests? How many funerals? Is he not aware that Australia appears on an international 'shame list' for having failed to eradicate trachoma, a preventable disease of poverty that blinds Aboriginal children?"

John Pilger: "When I last saw Arthur, we walked down to the Namoi riverbank and he told me how the police in Wee Waa were still frightened to go into the cell where Eddie had died and had pleaded with him to 'smoke out' Eddie's spirit. 'No bloody way!' Arthur told them."

Lyall Munro Jnr : "Our kids should aspire to be like our heroes and Arthur Murray was one of those heroes."

On February 25, 2004, NSW Senator, Lee Rhiannon, chased down the call for a parliamentary inquiry into the death of Mr Murray but to no avail.

In many people's view, it is indisputable that Wee Waa police killed 21 year old Eddie Murray in a dastardly crime for which they were not held accountable.

Despite his injuries and state of acute intoxication (6 times the legal driving limit), the police would have us believe their story that Eddie had managed to tear a long strip from a thick woollen prison blanket, deftly fold it, balance on tip toes and with outstretched arms thread it through the tight space in a ventilation vent above the cell door, tie two knots, fashion a perfect noose and strangled himself with his feet still touching the ground.

Gerry Georgatos: "As a researcher into custodial systems, I have reviewed the death in custody and it appears Eddie Murray was murdered, call it manslaughter or grievous bodily harm leading to death. Until the police are brought to justice for these deaths then Anne Murray is right that there is no likelihood of a reduction of police deaths in custody."

Anne Murray: "It is time after 33 years, with so much pain and anguish for my mother and father who have now gone, that the first (successful) prosecution of murderous and lying police officers takes place – and we can get it."

"Times have changed where now there may be some hope for true justice in the Courts or for a full and proper investigation or some genuine independent public inquiry, with the evidence presented that in more racist times the evidence was glossed over."

"If my family give up, which we will never do, then that first (successful) prosecution of coppers will keep on waiting and there will be more deaths in custody. We get that first justice and the black deaths in custody will stop."

